

EDISON, THOMAS ALVA (1847–1931). Edison's name is almost an American household word. He is well known as a modern inventor and often referred to as a wizard. Interestingly, most of his education was from home schooling by his mother and father. He began work as a telegraph operator. While working, he studied and experimented with telegraph technology. From 1886–1889, he began his career as an inventor. His first inventions included stock tickers, fire alarms, and an electrochemical telegraph. In 1886, Edison built a research facility in Menlo Park, New Jersey and here developed some of his most famous inventions. He developed a telephone and then in 1877, Edison captured sound and invented the first phonograph. He also developed an incandescent electric lighting system. Edison also worked with William Dickson and built the first real usable motion-picture camera.

By the time he died in 1931, Edison held more than a thousand U.S. patents.

See also **Illumination**.